

JOHN R. MCLANE

Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress



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INDIAN NATIONALISM AND
THE EARLY CONGRESS

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————— *John R. McLane* —————

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Published by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey
In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press,
Guildford, Surrey

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data will
be found on the last printed page of this book

This book has been composed in Linotype Baskerville

Printed in the United States of America
by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey

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This book analyzes the relations between the early Indian National Congress and the larger Indian society. The Congress was founded in 1885, before the emergence of nationalist organizations in other colonial societies which might have served as models. Because of this and the fact that most Congress leaders were both English educated and anglicized, the early Congress depended heavily upon English models and ideas. The early Congress was hobbled by the attempt to apply to India political forms and concepts from a society in a different stage of development and with a dissimilar culture. From the beginning, though, Congress leaders realized that in order to obtain reforms from their English rulers, they had to attract support from outside the small, scattered groups of graduates of English-language schools.

This study examines the efforts to reach new sections of the population—particularly elites without university education. In the pre-Gandhian period, the decisive developments affecting Congress relations with the larger society often occurred outside the Congress, in official policy, among landlords and Muslims, and in religious revitalization movements. The following pages therefore focus as much on the fringes of the Congress and beyond as on the Congress organization itself. If the first twenty years of the Congress lacked drama, they were nevertheless a vital period of experimentation and education for nationalist politicians which helped shape the later terrorist, Gandhian, and communal phases of Indian politics.

This study grew out of a dissertation written at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. My supervisor was Kenneth Ballhatchet to whom I am grateful for valuable criticism and support. I also want to thank my other teachers at S.O.A.S. who introduced me to South Asian history: A. L. Basham, Peter Hardy, and J. B. Harrison.

I benefited from advice from many other persons, too numerous to acknowledge here. I will, however, mention A.F.S. Ahmad, Amiya Barat, Bernard S. Cohn, Robert Frykenberg, Leonard A. Gordon, Stephen Hay, Briton Martin, S. R. Mehrotra, Thomas Metcalf, Mukhil Ray, Niranjana Sen Gupta, and S. R. Wasti. In addition, I owe a special debt to Barun De for his imaginative suggestions and to Tarun Mitra for his generous friendship.

Preface

Most of the research was done in the India Office Library in London. The I.O.L. staff was always cooperative. I wish also to thank the staff of the National Archives in New Delhi and the West Bengal State Archives in Calcutta.

The research was financed by grants from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council, the American Institute of Indian Studies, and Northwestern University. My colleagues in the History Department were supportive, not only in granting research time but in other, more important ways. I want to express my appreciation for that support and especially for the help of my former chairman, Gray C. Boyce. Few historians can have been as fortunate in having such excellent colleagues.

Finally, I owe more to Joan than I can express. She gave invaluable advice and help. Derek and Rebecca suffered my absences good-naturedly. It was always difficult to leave their company to return to my study.

Sections of Chapter Two were published previously in my article, "Bengal's Pre-1905 Congress Leadership and Hindu Society," in Rachel Van M. Baumer (editor), *Aspects of Bengali History and Society* (The University Press of Hawaii: Honolulu, 1975).

The map of India is reprinted from Briton Martin, *New India, 1885* (Berkeley, 1970). Copyright © 1969 by The Regents of the University of California; reprinted by permission of the University of California Press.

Abbreviations

Bd.	Board
Bom.	Bombay
Ch. Sec.	Chief Secretary
Col.	Collector
Com.	Commissioner
C. P.	Central Provinces
C.S.B.	Central Special Branch
Div.	Division
Fin.	Financial
Gov. Gen.	Governor General
IHP	India Home Proceedings
INC	Indian National Congress
IOL	India Office Library, London
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
Jud.	Judicial
LCP	Legislative Council Proceedings
Leg.	Legislative
L. P.	Lower Provinces
Lt. Gov.	Lieutenant-Governor
Mag.	Magistrate
NNR	Native Newspaper Report
NWP and O	North-Western Provinces and Oudh
Offg.	Officiating
P.	Punjab
Pol. and Sec.	Political and Secret
P. P.	Parliamentary Paper
Prog.	Proceeding
PSLI	Public and Secret Letters from India
Pub.	Public
R	Rajputana
Rev.	Revenue
Sec.	Secretary
S. of S.	Secretary of State
Supt.	Superintendent
T. and D.	Thagi and Dakoiti

Glossary

akhara: gymnasium

amla: subordinate officials of government or zamindar

anjuman: Muslim association

babu: originally a term of respect, but in the nineteenth century the English used it pejoratively to refer to educated Indians

bania: trader or shopkeeper

bhadralok: refined or cultured people in Bengal

cutchery: land record office where rent or revenue is collected

dakait: robber

Devanagari: script in which Sanskrit and Hindi are written; also called nagari

diwan: leading financial officer

fatwa: a ruling on dispute in Islamic law

gaurakshini: cow protection

goonda: a criminal or tough

gurdwara: Sikh temple

hartal: a strike, usually involving the closing of shops

jotdar: holder of rights to land, often a substantial peasant

Khalifa: the successor to the Prophet Muhammad as head of the Muslim community

Khilafat: the office held by the Khalifa; the movement to have the Sultan of Turkey recognized as the Khalifa of all Muslims

khot: hereditary revenue officer in the Konkan

kshatriya: the warrior varna or status group

Kuka: a member of the Namdhari (or Kuka) movement to reform the Sikh religion

lakh: one hundred thousand

lathi: a stick, usually bamboo, which is used as a weapon

mamlatdar: revenue officer in charge of subdistrict

mofussil: rural areas, as distinct from metropolitan centers

mukhtear: legal agent without authorization to practice in district courts

nawab: Muslim title, comparable to raja or maharaja

pandal: enclosure or marquee

Parsis: Zoroastrians who migrated to India from Persia

Puranas: ancient stories of Hinduism, compiled since the fourth century, which contain legends about gods and kings as well as religious instructions

Puranic: relating to the Hinduism of the Puranas; post-Vedic

ryot: cultivator or peasant; in Madras some ryots were small landlords

sabha: assembly or society

Glossary

- sadhu*: holy man or monk
sahib: honorific for European in India
sahukar: money-lender
samiti: society or organization
sanatan dharma sabha: orthodox Hindu society
sannyasi: wandering religious ascetic
satyagraha: literally, truth-grasping; Gandhi's technique of civil disobedience
sepoy: an Indian soldier
Shastras: texts on Hindu law and morality
sheristadar: head Indian officer in a court or collectorate
sudra: the lowest of the four varnas or theoretical status groups, but higher than untouchables
swadeshi: of one's own country; Indian-made
swaraj: self-rule
taluqdar: holder of a taluq or hereditary estate; taluqdars in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh were comparable to zamindars in Bengal
tehsildar: subordinate collector of revenue or rent
ulama: plural of alim, or a man learned in Islamic law
vakil: originally an agent, but in the nineteenth century a pleader authorized to practice in the law courts
varna: refers to the four theoretical classes or ranks in ancient Hindu society
Veda: the earliest body of Indian religious literature, consisting of hymns, commentaries, and philosophical texts
zamindar: holder of a zamindari or landed estate; landlord
zenanna: women's apartments

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A horizontal scale bar with a solid line and vertical tick marks. The number '0' is at the left end and '500' is at the right end. The word 'Miles' is centered below the bar.



This is a study of an early stage of the movement to build a national political community in British India. It focuses on the Indian National Congress, the party founded in 1885 to agitate for a larger role for Indians in governing their country. The Congress began modestly, without militancy and with a retired English civil servant as its chief organizer. Its membership came largely, and its leadership almost exclusively, from the graduates of colleges whose curriculum and language of instruction were English. The graduates constituted a tiny but rapidly expanding national community of their own. As many Congress leaders realized, their success in creating a community or nation of all Indians, as well as in gaining concessions from the English, depended upon their ability to win support outside the English-educated community. That capacity, in turn, would be determined by their relations with the larger Indian society.

The founders of the Congress faced formidable obstacles. Some of the obstacles were internal and included the Congress members' ambivalence toward the English who had created the modern educational and professional system through which many of them had prospered. Moreover, the Congress's many ties with landlords ruled out the possibility of seeking peasant support by championing their interests. The main obstacle outside the Congress was Indian Islam. One of every five Indians was a Muslim. Although a few Muslim leaders joined the Congress, a larger number seemed to accept the argument that Muslims and Hindus constituted separate nations.

Indian society in the 1880s was still diffuse. Modern voluntary associations had scarcely begun to undermine the more exclusive allegiances given to ascriptive groups. Western-educated Indians had formed local political associations in the major cities beginning in the middle of the century, and their organization of the Congress was a continuation of those local efforts to influence government policy. Starting political societies was part of a much larger process of realizing the potential for wider community identification where it existed, building bonds between members of traditional ethnic groups where they were absent, and mending cleavages when new ones appeared.

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Time and the integrating tendencies of modernization were on the side of the nation-builders. As more people entered a uniform school and career system, as the electoral process and interlocking webs of economic relationships expanded, the tasks of political consolidation could be expected to be correspondingly easier. In 1885, there were 160 English newspapers and periodicals with a circulation of 90,000; in 1905, there were 309 English newspapers with a circulation of 276,000. In the same period, the number of vernacular newspapers increased from 599 to 1,107 and their circulation from 299,000 to 817,000.¹ In 1886, 4,286 Indian students matriculated and 708 received their B.A.s; in 1905, the numbers were 8,211 and 1,570, respectively. In 1887, there were 298,000 persons studying English and in 1907 there were 505,000.² The facilities for communication underwent similar expansion. In 1887, the 15,245 miles of operating railroads carried 111 million passengers; by 1913, the mileage had doubled and the passengers had quadrupled. In the same period, the number of letters and postcards mailed tripled, reaching 892 million, and the number of telegrams increased from 3½ million to 15½ million.³ These trends added to the potential strength of nationalism, but the size of the literate classes and other indices of modernization remained small relative to the total population. Less than 1 per cent of British India's 244 million people in 1911 were literate in English, and only 6 per cent were able to read and write in their own language. On the other hand, literacy among male adults was 11 per cent and among city-dwellers it was 30 per cent.⁴

It hardly needs to be said that these gross figures, while indicating that the opportunities for education, association, and communication were increasing, do not necessarily mean that a single, all-Indian community was being formed. Insofar as these opportunities spread unequally and led disadvantaged sections of the population to feel threatened by rival sections, and insofar as new opportunities for association were used by groups hostile to

¹ The 1885 figures include periodicals while the 1905 figures refer to newspapers alone.

² Govt. of India dispatch, 21 March 1907, No. 7, IHP, Pub., MSS. Eur. D. 573/29.

³ Royal Commission on the Public Services in India, *Report of the Commissioners* (London, 1917), I, 12.

⁴ East India (Constitutional Reforms), *Report on Indian Constitution Reforms* (P. P. Cd.9109 of 1918), p. 111.

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all-Indian integration, they tended to hinder the making of a nation. The emerging political and legal order was one in which English education provided the surest access to new opportunities for political influence and economic success. However, the differential spread of education meant that a much larger percentage of Hindus than Muslims, of high castes than low castes, and of people from coastal provinces than from the interior were entering college. Some of the more group-conscious minorities who believed their life opportunities were decreasing relative to those of rival groups emphasized their separate identity and sought protective treatment from the English. The founding of the all-India Muslim League in 1906 and the growth of the south Indian non-Brahman movement are examples of this countermobilization and search for distinctive identities. In the case of the Muslims, the English stimulated the growth of communal consciousness by partitioning Bengal in 1905 into separate Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority provinces and by granting separate electorates to Muslims in the 1909 legislative council reforms.

The entry of Indians into political life through the religious community was by no means confined to Muslims. Groups of Hindus combined against cow slaughter, conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity, nonobservance of orthodox marriage and eating regulations, and British legislation to regulate the age of marriage. A few prominent Congress members were active in Hindu protest and revival movements. But the anglicized leadership kept specifically Hindu issues and symbols out of formal Congress proceedings in accordance with their own cultural preferences and in an attempt to disarm Muslim apprehensions about coexistence with the Hindu majority. This simultaneously increased Congress dependence on English political traditions and diminished the appeal of the Congress for men without English education. One of the major reasons for the Congress's arrested development before 1905 was its refusal to use Hindu culture, without which the movement lacked emotional intensity and an atmosphere congenial to most Hindus. Herein lay a major dilemma for the Congress movement. To Hinduize the Congress would risk alarming Muslims who were already skeptical, and it would endanger the ability of the anglicized leadership to perpetuate their autocratic control of the Congress. But continuing the Congress in its original acultural, elitist form threatened to render impotent its efforts to arouse a patriotic love of India and

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to gain political power for Indians. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the dimensions of this dilemma were becoming clear as increasing numbers of Indians pursued nationalist goals outside the Congress party in the movements to promote *swadeshi* (literally, of one's own country) commerce and industry, national education (schooling with Indian curricula and control), and the revitalization of Vedic and Puranic Hinduism.

The aim of this study is to analyze the competition between Indian elites with conflicting conceptions of political community, from the founding of the Congress in 1885 to the dramatic developments between 1905 and 1909. In these last five years, many of the incipient conflicts and trends of the preceding two decades manifested themselves in new cultural and political activities. Regional and religious appeals were used to mobilize large numbers of people who had previously not participated in nationalist politics; the Congress split into mutually hostile moderate and extremist branches; the all-India Muslim League was founded; Hindu-Muslim riots broke out; and guns and bombs were used by secret terrorist societies in Bengal, Bihar, and Bombay.

Analysis of Indian politics on a national scale in this period presents special problems. Cultural traditions, social structure, the distribution of castes, religions, education, and land, and the configuration of political forces in general varied so markedly from one region to the next that generalizations which apply to one part of India often do not to another. Moreover, the level of political involvement was generally so low, especially in all-Indian organizations, that gauging the strength of political identification is an uncertain undertaking. In addition, the accumulation of basic historical data concerning Indian politics, and especially political behavior, in this period is still in its infancy. In recent years, though, a number of valuable political studies have appeared which have increased our understanding of the interaction between national, regional, and local levels of politics. Three books analyze the founding of the Indian National Congress and its connections with regional and local politics.⁵ Other recent studies explicitly concentrate on regional and local affairs.

⁵ Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1971); S. R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress* (Delhi, 1971); and Briton Martin, *New India, 1885: British Official Policy and the Emergence of the Indian National Congress* (Berkeley, 1969).

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Some of these recent studies suggest that the Indian National Congress may have been in some major sense not really national, that the Congress functioned as a vehicle for the pursuit of parochial goals and the advancement of local careers. C. A. Bayly has argued that for "many local leaders, the Congress was essentially a secondary organization, and their association with it derived from the need to pursue within the regional and all-India skeleton of organization and aspiration the much more circumscribed local and sectional aims which derived from lower levels of politics."⁶ Anil Seal has gone further and claims that "it is no longer credible to write about a [Congress] movement grounded in common aims, led by men with similar backgrounds, and recruited from widening groups with compatible interests. That movement now looks more like a ramshackle coalition throughout its long career. Its unity seems a figment."⁷ The present author does not accept the argument that the Congress was without common aims or that the Congress was peculiarly a movement of self-interested individuals. The Indian founders of the Congress were impressed by the nobility of a nationalist vision of subordinating the interests of self, family, and caste to the interests of an Indian nation. The Congress vision held that Indians shared fundamental economic and political interests, that those interests were in conflict with those of Britain, and that the collective welfare of all Indians could be improved by restructuring the relations between India and her foreign rulers.⁸

⁶ C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad, 1880-1920* (Oxford, 1975), p. 4.

⁷ Anil Seal, "Imperialism and Nationalism in India," in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, and Anil Seal (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics 1870-1940* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 2.

⁸ Anil Seal speculates on the motivation of men who joined the Congress in the following words: "The advantages of one group meant the drawbacks of the rest. The successes of the advanced regions blocked the aspirations of the backward. With all these local rivalries and the glaring national differences between east, west and south, there was still a level at which the elites of Bengal, Bombay and Madras could work together—and this was the level of all-India. In so doing, their main purpose may well have been to strengthen their position inside their local societies" (*The Emergence*, pp. 112-113).

The assumption that one group's gain is another's loss might apply to a static society not experiencing economic growth. But many sections of the Indian economy were growing in the late nineteenth century.

Political motivation is often complex and difficult to determine. Yet subordination of individual and group interest to the interests of the larger

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The first generation of Congress leaders was groping for a means of translating the vision into concrete political tactics. Congress leaders were sometimes diverted from this task by their personal careers. Nevertheless, the vision was potent, sincerely held, and widely shared.

But having said that, it is readily conceded that local politics occupied a much greater share of the time and energies of educated Indians than did national politics. An understanding of local and regional affairs is indispensable for analysis of nationalism. Involvement in town and regional politics first brought Indian nationalists into contact with colonial institutions and stimulated a desire to alter those institutions. It also provided the training in the skills of organization and communication necessary for future leadership in the Congress. Each Indian who attended one of the annual Congress sessions carried with him the perceptions shaped at home. If participation in local affairs revealed the potentialities for uniting Indians, local experiences often showed how easily Indians were divided. The character of local politics was such that the perceptions a man gained in his home region often limited or depressed his nationalist aspirations. As our understanding of particular localities has grown, so has the realization that local politics were extraordinarily complex, fluid, even volatile. Political alliances were continually shifting as the topics of public controversy changed and as new political arenas were created. At times, local politics polarized along lines determined by caste, linguistic, or religious ties, at other times around issues of economic group interest, and at others around the personalities or neighborhoods of faction leaders and their clients.

C. A. Bayly's study of the Allahabad region has demonstrated the vitality of patron-client relationships in the period between 1880 and 1920, and the corresponding weakness of other forms of political association. The most powerful patrons of Allahabad were the wealthy bankers and traders, some of whom owned large *zamindaris*. Their clients included relatives who "shared in the profits of the family businesses and ran subsidiary trades and services." A second group of clients included the priests, lawyers,

society may provide both increased self-respect and higher political status. Evidence of Congressmen's concern about the welfare of broad sections of the Indian population is presented in Section III below.

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and other specialists who worked to maintain the family's "ritual, social, and political status." In addition, "publicists and literati attached themselves to the connections of town magnates as hagiographers and propagandists, or in the hope of gaining support for wider religious or political projects."⁹ While we lack detailed studies of most other localities, there is good reason to believe that the patron-client model was common throughout India in the late nineteenth century, that clients clustered around a multitude of merchant, banker, landlord, and lawyer patrons in most cities, and that patron-client ties cut across other alliances based on caste, economic interest, and, sometimes, religion. The patron-client relationship was most fully operative at the local level, but it extended into the Congress as well. While the Congress seemed to be monopolized by lawyers, the lawyers were frequently linked through mercantile and landed patrons, as well as *vakil* clients, to a broad spectrum of society.

Another important conclusion which emerges from recent studies, especially Bayly's, is that in the period under review, ethnicity was not the most common determinant of political allegiance or alienation.¹⁰ The divisions between Brahmans and non-Brahmans, Hindus and Muslims, and one regional linguistic group and another were far less common in the late nineteenth century than after World War I. However, as Chapters Nine, Ten, and Eleven suggest, Hindu-Muslim rivalry escalated in north India in the 1890s.

Studies by Anil Seal, C. A. Bayly, R. Suntharalingam,¹¹ and others suggest that several related processes were drawing educated Indians into local politics in the 1870s and 1880s. First, the rapid expansion of institutions of higher education had produced degree-holders who, in contrast to the first generation of graduates, could not find government employment which they considered suitable to their qualifications.¹² Many turned to the law, education, and journalism. Some entered the fields of medicine or business. But none of these professions was expanding fast enough in the last quarter of the century to absorb the surplus college graduates.¹³ Graduate unemployment intensified Indian interest

⁹ Bayly, *The Local Roots*, pp. 74-75. ¹⁰ In particular, see *ibid.*, p. 281.

¹¹ R. Suntharalingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891* (Tucson, 1974).

¹² Mehrotra, *The Emergence*, p. 245.

¹³ Seal, *The Emergence*, p. 128, and Suntharalingam, *Politics*, pp. 134ff.

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in lowering racial barriers in the civil service and the legal profession and in political reform in general. Partly as a result of the new ferment among graduates, the government became more sensitive to Indian opinion. Government surveys of Indian opinions, though, accelerated the politicization, although often not the unification, of educated elites. The Education Commission of 1883 and the Public Service Commission of 1886–1887 attracted large numbers of witnesses, memorials, and editorials commenting on the differential effects of official policies on particular sections of Indian society.

English interest in diffusing and channeling the aspirations of both traditionally educated and Western-educated Indians led to reform of local self-government. Lord Ripon's 1882 Resolution on Local Self-Government enlarged the role of elected Indians in municipal and district committees. Municipal governments, with their ability to raise or lower taxes, award contracts for public works, distribute patronage, license trade, and regulate religious festivals, affected the interests of diverse groups and attracted large numbers of men into public affairs.¹⁴

Graduate unemployment, official solicitation of Indian opinions, and the extension of government functions stimulated the organization of local voluntary associations. During the later decades of the nineteenth century, a bewildering variety of local societies were started to pursue idealistic-sounding objectives. Whether or not their primary objectives were political, their activities served to expand political horizons and to provide their members with political skills. Even the cultural, religious, linguistic, and educational societies found that, sooner or later, government policies affected the goals they had set for themselves. In joining together to pursue a common purpose, in holding formal meetings and electing officers, in publishing newspapers or pamphlets, the local societies were introducing their members to the same organizational experiences as societies with explicit political aims. Although the multiplication of local societies appeared to stimulate competition and divisiveness at times, it also was integrating the competitors into an increasingly uniform political system, with the government generally accepted as the

¹⁴ By 1895, municipal income in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh equalled a full one-eighth of the total provincial expenditure. Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 55.

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arbitrator and ultimate authority. Moreover, the growth of local societies was characterized by multiple membership which reduced the intensity of certain identities. Local politics were pluralistic with alliances and membership which crisscrossed the ascriptive communities based on language, religion, and caste.

There were four broad categories of local voluntary associations. The first were the local political associations which explicitly claimed to represent the interests of Indians to the government. In effect, they became the regional arms of the Congress after 1885. Located in the largest provincial towns (usually the administrative capitals), many had branch associations in the *mofussil*. Their leaders were elected to Congress offices as well as to municipal and provincial legislative councils. They included the Triplicane Literary Society (1868) and the Mahajana Sabha (1894) of Madras, the Indian Association of Calcutta (1876), the Allahabad People's Association (1885–1886), the Indian Association of Lahore (1877), the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha (1867), and the Bombay Presidency Association (1885).

Professional and economic interest associations constitute a second category of local organizations. These included associations of landholders, teachers, lawyers, and municipal ratepayers as well as chambers of commerce. It was not uncommon for Hindus and Muslims to belong to the same professional or economic interest organization. In contrast to the political societies, these organizations generally concentrated their attention on government policies which affected specific economic or professional interests.

A third, more amorphous category was the social reform societies. They set up schools and colleges, science and religious study groups, reading rooms, and debating societies; they sponsored lectures on a range of subjects from temperance to the promotion of Indian industries; and they campaigned for higher marriage age, widow-remarriage, and the amalgamation of sub-castes. They tended to be the least political of local societies, in part because they sought the internal, self-reform of Indian society, in part because many of their leaders belonged to the administrative elite,¹⁵ and in part because their educational enterprises depended on government grants-in-aid. But Congress leaders were among their most active members. Those societies

¹⁵ Suntharalingam, *Politics*, Chapter 2.

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were extending the secular, universal values of Western schooling, as well as the nonsectarian universalism of modernized Hinduism and Islam. In doing so, they were theoretically helping to create a predisposition to emphasize what Hindus or Muslims shared and to break down the isolating identifications of ethnicity and religious sect. In reality, the reformers tended in the short run to create what amounted to new sectarian divisions. The reformers' attacks on the unreformed customs of their coreligionists angered orthodox groups and split society into antagonistic groups.

The fastest growing reform society in the late nineteenth century was the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samaj was similar to the other Hindu reform societies in that it was led by university graduates who worked to reduce the influence of caste, ritual, and priests and who claimed to be returning to classical Hinduism of Vedic times. Occasionally, Arya Samaj attacks on caste and Puranic or post-Vedic Hinduism were vehement and vitriolic. In other respects, though, the Arya Samaj resembled the fourth category of local organizations: societies for the defense of traditional culture. The Arya Samaj, despite its reformism, championed cow protection and the use of the Devanagari script—issues that were highly popular among orthodox Hindus.

Societies for the defense of traditional Hindu culture await detailed study. They embraced a variety of objectives but seemed to be united by a belief that the activities of Hindu social reformers, Muslims, Christian missionaries, and the government threatened the integrity and status of Hinduism. Beyond that, generalization becomes hazardous. Although they were called *sanatan dharma sabhas* (orthodox religious societies) and although, in contrast to the Arya Samaj, they rarely criticized priestly authority, caste practices, or Puranic Hinduism, many of them in fact contributed to the neoclassical Vedic revival and de-emphasized caste as the central institution of Hinduism. For a brief period in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the *sanatan dharma sabhas* agitated for a ban on cow slaughter. But language reform and the promotion of Sanskrit and Hindi literature were the more permanent concerns of the *sanatanists*.

Language reform was promoted by Hindu *sabhas* in the Hindi-speaking regions of northern India. The goals of linguistic reformers were varied. Some Hindus wished to standardize Hindi in order to reduce the differences between regional dialects and between the Hindi spoken by the elites and the masses. Some

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campaigns to have Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, recognized as an official language alongside Urdu. Urdu's vocabulary and grammar were similar to Hindi's, but its script was Persian. Proponents of the elevation of Hindi to the status of an official language argued that Hindus who could not read and write Urdu would be placed on an equal footing with Muslims in competition for government employment and in the law courts. The advocates of Hindi won their objective in Bihar in 1881 and in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh in 1900.¹⁶ In the process, they antagonized many Muslims who, as the former ruling elite, had enjoyed concrete advantages from their superior knowledge of Urdu.¹⁷

Hinduism was emerging as a major source of political identification in north India through the activities of linguistic reformers, cow protectors, and sanatan dharma sabhas. Their activities were politicizing persons untouched by other voluntary associations. Among Muslims, there was a parallel growth of local *anjumans* or Muslim associations. The incentive for founding anjumans was frequently a desire to promote educational opportunities for Muslims or to resist Hindu attacks on cow slaughter and on the exclusive use of the Persian script.

The spread of Hindu sabhas and Muslim anjumans contributed to, and provided evidence of, a deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations. Yet in the late nineteenth century the deterioration seemed neither deep nor irreversible. Although the rivalry and conflict between Hindus and Muslims were increasing, the main thrust of sabha and anjuman activities was inward and noncompetitive. Probably their greater political significance, at least in the short run, was in demonstrating to Western-educated nationalists the size and political potential of traditionally educated groups. The mobilization of these people into cultural defense associations reminded university graduates of their own cultural ambivalence and revealed how isolated they were from their own society. Faced with this mobilization, social reformers were forced

¹⁶ Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 129ff.

¹⁷ Paul Brass (*ibid.*, pp. 137–138) argues that it is less useful to treat the Hindi-Urdu conflict as "the critical factor in the development of Muslim separatism and Hindu-Muslim conflict" than as an extension of a competition between Hindu and Muslim elites "for administrative and political power and for employment." "Religion and language were the symbolic instruments in this essentially political conflict."

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to trim their goals and to search for an accommodation, intellectually if not organizationally, with religious populism. The growth of Hindu sabhas and Hindu opposition to government legislation in 1891 raising the legal age of marriage revealed the strength of what Peter Hardy called "an underworld," a level of society not ordinarily visible to the Indian barrister of Bombay or Calcutta but nevertheless exercising "a subtle pull upon" British policies as well as, he might have added, upon university graduates. Hardy's analysis of the Muslim "underworld" might have described the Hindu social strata which supported the sanatan sabhas.

It is not easy to define the Muslim underworld, except negatively. It was poor rather than rich, respectable rather than ruffianly, school-educated rather than university- or college-educated, traditionally- rather than modern-educated. It was drawn from the lower middle class of a pre-industrial society, printers, lithographers, booksellers, teachers, retail shopkeepers, skilled craftsmen and petty zamindars, men literate in the vernacular, able and willing to read the large annual output of Muslim devotional literature in Urdu. Politically they were unorganized and lacking in sense of direction, but . . . they were quick to be seized by religious passion.¹⁸

The expansion of the religious sabhas and anjumans points to one of the thorniest obstacles to Congress efforts to build a nation. Congress leaders sometimes spoke as if their first objective was to bridge the gap between the elites and the masses. In fact, the division between the Western-educated elite and the traditional elites was more immediate and more threatening to the search for common identities. The Western-educated Congressman often defined his national identity in exclusively political terms, without mention of culture. The problem of cultural pluralism would be solved, he hoped, by avoiding it. But for many others in India's multiethnic society, the shift from the parochial loyalties of kinship and caste to national loyalties was not direct. Rather "intermediate loyalties," based on language and religion, "have frequently intervened and been adapted as new forms of identity and as new vehicles of participation in the modern state."¹⁹ As language and religion were adapted by more people in northern

¹⁸ P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 169.

¹⁹ Brass, *Language*, p. 6.

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and western India in the late nineteenth century, the Congress as an organization failed to develop a response which might have either blunted or capitalized on the new developments. At times it seemed that the politics of language and religion might paralyze Congress leadership. Congress leaders from the coastal provinces believed that they had outgrown the parochial identities of an earlier generation and that they represented the vanguard of India's historical progress. They were unprepared, collectively at least, to cope with the emergence of subnationalisms.

Individually, however, many university-educated Congressmen were attracted to the culture-strengthening aspects of subnationalist movements. Finding the Congress brand of acultural nationalism socially isolating and emotionally unsatisfying, a growing number of Congressmen were exploring avenues of political identification which the Congress had avoided. These Congressmen were unwilling to recognize the incipient contradictions between the Congress emphasis upon abstract political rights for all Indians and the separate cultural revitalization movements among Hindus and Muslims. The contradictions were not obvious. The primary objective of most religious and linguistic reform movements was to reduce internal social divisions or to remove perceived character deficiencies.

Rarely did leaders of these movements seek conflict with other religious or linguistic groups. Some of the most respected Congress leaders were being drawn into these movements at the end of the nineteenth century. Madan Mohan Malaviya was active in the movement to secure government recognition of Devanagari as an official script in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh.²⁰ Romeshchandra Dutt wrote Bengali novels about Hindu heroism in wars in which, almost incidentally, Hindus fought Muslims.²¹ Lala Lajpat Rai championed the use of Hindi in place of Urdu and the reconversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism. Bal Gangadhar Tilak organized festivals in honor of the Hindu god Ganapati and of Shivaji, the seventeenth-century rebel against Muslim rule.²² In each of these cases, the intention was to overcome divisions and deficiencies within Hindu society, not to

²⁰ Bayly, *The Local Roots*, p. 148.

²¹ Leonard A. Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement 1876-1940* (New York, 1974), p. 46.

²² Richard I. Cashman, *The Myth of the Lokamanya: Tilak and Mass Politics in Maharashtra* (Berkeley, 1975), Chapters iv and v.

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create antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. The consequence of their activities, though, was to strengthen a specifically Hindu rather than an all-Indian identity. In the late nineteenth century, it was unclear which of the competing identities would become paramount. Would an all-Indian consciousness of England's economic exploitation and political subjection catch people's imaginations? Or would the nationalist dream of united consciousness and action be shattered by the growth of sub-nationalisms based on religion or language? How long would the cultural and economic isolation of Western-educated groups prevent them from responding to the aspirations and fears of less privileged groups? Nationalist concern with each of these questions increased in the period under review. But the answers often seemed to be becoming less certain.

This study is divided into four sections. Part I, by way of further introduction, discusses the British government and the leaders of the Congress. Chapter One examines the political policies of the government in the context of British imperial interests and racism. The British monopolized formal governmental power and determined many of the conditions under which Indians competed for influence and economic opportunities. Chapter Two is a social portrait of the English-educated elite which benefited most from those opportunities and whose members founded and controlled the Congress until World War I. It draws upon biographical information to describe the ambiguous position Congress leaders occupied in their private and professional lives in relation to both the British and Indian society.

Part II analyzes the Congress itself during its first two decades. After its first five years, the Congress organization stopped growing in size and failed to develop new goals and activities. Chapter Three attributes part of this stagnation to the effects of Allan Octavian Hume's dominance of the Congress, his abortive attempts to draw Muslims and peasants into the Congress, and the resulting estrangement between Hume and Indian leaders. The loss of momentum, the apathy, and the financial problems of the Congress following Hume's departure from India are discussed in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five the budding dispute over the proper tactics for achieving nationalist goals is related to the demands for a democratic constitution for the Congress Party.

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The moderate Congress leadership under Pherozeshah Mehta's guidance rejected suggestions that mendicant tactics and autocratic internal organization should be replaced with direct action and open election procedures. The low-key crisis in Congress affairs was so debilitating, and the failure of the Congress leadership to represent the full spectrum of nationalist feelings so complete, that some friends of the Congress suggested that the movement should be suspended.

Part III is an attempt to define the composition and program of the Congress in terms of economic interest. Chapter Six argues that behind the rivalry between urban professionals and titled landholders for political influence, there was a counterbalancing interdependence and a mutuality of economic interest. Chapters Seven and Eight test the themes of political rivalry and economic interdependence against the Congress treatment of agrarian legislation proposed by the British. Despite the Congress's connections with landlords and money-lenders and the desire of some members to use the Congress to protect their own and their patrons' economic position, the Congress generally remained neutral in conflicts over tenancy and usury legislation in the interests of national unity. This preserved the potentiality for recruiting lower-class members, but it also left many affluent Indians indifferent to the Congress platform.

Two Hindu revitalization movements which were organizationally separate from the Congress but which nevertheless affected the Congress are the subject of Part IV. A clearer perspective of the strengths and the limitations of the Congress is sought by examining the political concerns of Indians who deliberately stood apart from or who had only marginal contact with the Congress. Some revitalization movements, such as the Arya Samaj, promoted a selective emphasis or reinterpretation of certain aspects of Hindu tradition with the effect that a revival of an ancient value was often a reform along modern lines. In other movements, Hindu revivalists sought to conserve existing Hindu culture, including its social stratification and Brahman supremacy, against English and Indian pressures for reform. But in either case, the disparate efforts to arouse pride in the cultural and political achievements of Indian civilization, the aggressive affirmation of Hinduism's superiority over Christian culture, and the attempts to tighten the bonds of Hindu community tended to isolate further the anglicized reformist leadership of the Congress.

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They also reduced the Congress's chance of persuading Muslims to join the Congress. Chapters Nine and Ten deal with the movement to prevent the English and Muslims from killing cows. The movement originally appealed to high-caste Hindus in central and north India who wanted to protect a source of nutrition and a symbol of the Hindu way of life. In 1893, however, the movement provoked serious communal riots in widely scattered parts of India. Until 1893, Hindu-Muslim disturbances had been uncommon. Chapter Eleven discusses the new and related Hindu interest in developing physical courage and overcoming a reputation for lack of bravery and robustness. It concentrates on the Maharashtrian Brahman terrorist, Damodar Chapekar, who wrote a remarkable autobiography explaining his reasons for murdering two English officials in 1897 and for his attacks on Christian missionaries and reformed Hindus. His resentment at the decline of respect for Brahmans, cows, and Hindu orthodoxy in general, combined with his personal economic frustrations, seem to have been characteristic of men who joined militant Hindu organizations and participated in communal riots.

The study concludes with a brief discussion of the transformation of nationalist politics in the period following the partition of Bengal in 1905, a transformation which followed the lines anticipated by developments within and on the fringes of the Congress in its first twenty years. The Congress was almost destroyed by the split between moderates and extremists. Nationalists adopted new militant forms of protest, some violent and some nonviolent, and they recruited support from sections of the population previously ignored. And perhaps of greater consequence for the future evolution of Indian nationalism, Muslims formed the all-India Muslim League and persuaded the British to give constitutional recognition to Muslim separateness.

PART I

THE RULERS

A majority of the leaders of the early Indian National Congress had been educated in England, most had had English teachers, most drew their main political ideas from English traditions. All spoke English and used it to communicate with nationalist colleagues from other linguistic regions. In their professions, many of them had English superiors as well as English rivals. When Indians sought administrative change or constitutional reform, they had to ask English officials or English politicians. And in seeking reform, they looked for allies both in England and among the small band of sympathetic editors, missionaries, administrators, and other European friends within India. The tactics and rhetoric of pre-Gandhian nationalism were profoundly affected by the leaders' multiple dependencies upon the rulers' language, culture, and political divisions.

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The intimate association with the English, however, should not obscure the basic conflict which existed between English national interests and the ultimate goals of the Indian national movement. The Indian National Congress was founded to gain Indians a larger share of political and economic power. That power at its higher levels was monopolized by the English. Indian demands in the 1870s and 1880s for liberalization provoked English assertions of the superiority of Western civilization and a determination not to compromise their monopoly. Few Englishmen doubted the necessity or stability of British rule. Most believed India was Britain's and would remain so indefinitely. It was, as Francis Hutchins has argued, the age of "the illusion of permanence."¹ English rejection of nationalist demands, and racist arguments

¹ Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, 1967).

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and behavior which accompanied the rejection, provided a powerful impetus to the growth of nationalism.

Most Englishmen in India seemed to feel the general principles guiding British administration, while subject to refinement and minor improvements, were satisfactory on the whole. As long as the natives did not rebel, and as long as India continued to be profitable for British public and private interests, the great majority of Englishmen were content with the autocratic character of the Raj. For the indefinite future, there was no need to share political power with Indians. To do so would lessen India's economic and strategic value.

The value of the Indian connection was obvious and growing in the last two decades of the century. As one official wrote in 1892, "if British rule should end, the value of the interests affected would be so great that practically no adequate compensation would be possible."² Englishmen had invested heavily in Indian agricultural and extractive industries, including tea, coffee, jute, indigo, and coal; they had bought shares in the Indian railways, some of which had had a guaranteed rate of profit and had been located to serve British manufacturing and military needs; they were able to sell British textiles in a sizable market in competition with the young, unprotected Indian textile industry; and they owned the largest banks, insurance companies, export houses, and shipping lines.³ Almost one-fifth of the total British overseas investment was in India and about one-fifth of British exports went to India.⁴ In return, the Government of India sent about one-fifth of its annual revenues to Britain as payment for loans, investments, administrative services, and military supplies and personnel.⁵

India was also vital to British economic and strategic interests in the rest of Asia and in east Africa. British Indian banks serv-

² Charles Lewis Tupper, *Our Indian Protectorate: An Introduction to the Study of the Relations between the British Government and its Indian Feudatories* (London, 1893), p. 390.

³ See Michael Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India* (London, 1965), Chapter 1.

⁴ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism in the Dark Continent* (New York, 1961), p. 11.

⁵ See John R. McLane, "The Drain of Wealth and Indian Nationalism at the Turn of the Century," in *Contributions to Indian Economic History* II, ed. Tapan Raychaudhuri (Calcutta, 1963).

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iced British trade in the Indian Ocean and further east, and Indian labor was exported to build railways, mine minerals, and work on British plantations. In strategic terms, India was Britain's most valued possession, representing her "oriental barracks," a reservoir of military manpower, a subsidy for the cost of the British military establishment, and a potential second front against Russia. The Indian Army was used for imperial and expansionist purposes which the British public tolerated because India paid a major share of the cost. In the forty years after the Mutiny, the Indian Army went to China (1859), Ethiopia (1867), Singapore (1867), Hong Kong (1868), Afghanistan (1878), Egypt (1882), Burma (1885), Nyasa (1893), the Sudan (1896), and Uganda (1896).⁶ Although the Indian taxpayers' share of the costs was gradually decreased in response to nationalist complaints, India was still required to contribute to Britain's non-Indian interests. As late as 1908, the Liberal secretary of state for India, Lord John Morley, agreed to the War Office's request to increase India's annual contribution to English army reserves from £420,000 to £720,000. When Lord Kitchener objected, the War Office replied

The principles of fair dealing enunciated by Lord Kitchener might be applicable enough to two independent states in alliance with each other. They are inapplicable to a dependency inhabited by alien races, our hold over which is not based on the general goodwill of those disunited races.⁷

India, in other words, was held as she had been taken—by the sword.

The sword, it was hoped, would remain sheathed except to awe the native population, and the ordinary work of administration was performed by the civilians of the Indian Civil Service. The largely British I.C.S. was a powerful opponent of nationalist aspiration in its own right. The more than 900 members were a well-paid elite who looked forward to a varied and exotic career and the option of retiring with a generous pension after 25 years. All but a few Indians were kept out by giving the I.C.S. entrance examinations in England in subjects which ordinarily required years of schooling in England. When British officials discussed

⁶ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 12.

⁷ Stanley A. Wolpert, *Morley and India, 1906-1910* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 216.

changing this system in the late nineteenth century, they usually considered ways of restricting, rather than expanding, the trickle of Indians entering the I.C.S. By 1902, 40 of the 1,067 I.C.S. officers were "Natives."⁸

Exclusion of Indians from high office in the allied services was even more effective than in the I.C.S. In 1907, "not a single post out of 278 paying Rs. 800 or more per year was held by an Indian in the forest, police, post office, telegraph, salt, survey, or political services of British India."⁹ Taking the civil services together, and using a lower salary base, in 1887 Europeans held 4,836 of the 8,840 posts paying Rs. 200 per month or more; in 1913 they held 4,898 out of 11,064. In both years, Anglo-Indians held a third as many as Indians and Burmans, so that Indians and Burmans held a mere 34 per cent of the total in 1887 and 42 per cent in 1913.¹⁰ The combined opposition of British administrators and British commercial and military interests to any relaxation of their privileged position continued until World War I to be an insurmountable obstacle to realization of the nationalist goal of Indianization of the Raj.

An earlier generation of Englishmen had held that preparation for self-rule was part of their mission in India. But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as nationalists asked to share power and as Gladstonian liberalism declined in popularity in England, justification for continuing autocracy was frequently heard. James Fitzjames Stephen, Henry Maine, and others with Indian experience were among leading Liberals who joined Conservatives in suggesting that extending forms of democracy might inhibit creative individualism and initiative, that it might produce inefficient government, and that it would weaken the Empire.¹¹ The strongly conservative current within the Liberal Party, which emerged clearly during the controversy over the Irish Home Rule Bill in 1886, meant that the leaders of both major British political parties were unsympathetic to the major demands of the Indian National Congress. The new conservatism was a retreat from the earlier "emphasis on moral force and the

⁸ Sir John Strachey, *India: Its Administration and Progress*, 3rd ed. (London, 1903), p. 77.

⁹ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 178-179.

¹⁰ Royal Commission on the Public Services in India, *Report*, I, 26.

¹¹ John Roach, "Liberalism and the Victorian Intelligentsia," *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, XIII, No. 1, 58-80.

influence of the example of British character, to the less ambitious idea that India was held simply by military power."¹²

Congress demands were not rejected indiscriminately. They were formulated in the vocabulary of English liberalism, they were advanced through constitutional channels, and they were supported by Liberal backbenchers and a handful of active and retired I.C.S. officers. Most specific policy demands were moderate and would not have fundamentally compromised British political and economic interests. Public commissions on education, civil service, finance, and famine listened to lengthy testimony from Indian and British witnesses and then recommended reforms along lines suggested by the more moderate critics. Nationalist requests for Indianization of the administration, for example, were considered by the Public Service Commission which was appointed in 1886. The commission rejected the demand for simultaneous I.C.S. examinations in India and Britain. As a consolation, though, a small number of posts were transferred from the I.C.S. to the Provincial Civil Service (the examinations for which were held in India), and the maximum age limit for entrance into the I.C.S. was raised from nineteen to twenty-three, making it somewhat easier for Indians to compete. However, these were minor changes. In 1915, more than 50 years after the first Indian was admitted, only 63 Indians, or 5 per cent of the total, were members of the I.C.S. Rapid Indianization began only with World War I.¹³

The British were more accommodating to nationalist requests for representative institutions. Most district boards and municipal councils had large Indian majorities by the 1880s. Officials regarded local government as a training ground and safety valve for Indian political aspirations. However, educated nationalists were far more interested in the provincial and the Viceroy's legislative councils. Parliament enlarged the councils in 1892 for the first time in thirty years, and under the Councils Act of 1892 certain Indian political bodies were given the right to nominate members to the councils. But the role of the Indian minority in the councils remained an advisory one, and individual provincial councils met as infrequently as half a dozen times in some years.

The slight modification in the procedures for recruiting civil

¹² Hutchins, *The Illusion*, p. 186.

¹³ Sir Edward Blunt, *The I.C.S.: The Indian Civil Service* (London, 1965), pp. 50-52.

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servants and the Councils Act of 1892 fell far short of Congress goals. Yet the administrations of Lord Lansdowne (1888–1894), Lord Elgin (1894–1898), and Lord Curzon (1898–1905) believed that the government had gone as far as it should in meeting Indian desires for participation in the public service and legislatures. Some officials felt that it had gone too far, that it should have reserved the 900 or so highest posts for Englishmen. Curzon wrote in 1900 that the absence of an absolute racial qualification meant these posts were “being filched away by the superior wits of the Natives in the English examination.” He thought this “to be the greatest peril with which British administration in India was confronted.”¹⁴ Attitudes of this sort were common. They meant that the government and the Congress had reached an impasse within a few years of the Congress’s founding. It is not too much to say that between 1892 and 1907, no major reform was made in response to nationalist aspirations.

EFFORTS TO ISOLATE THE CONGRESS

Although the Congress was not regarded as an immediate threat to the British, the government wanted to prevent it from becoming one. The government evolved a number of strategies for isolating and weakening the Congress. These strategies were most clearly articulated, and were apparently effective, during Lord Curzon’s viceroyalty. Official control over education and the press was tightened, official pressure was applied to rural supporters of the Congress, the Congress was deliberately ignored in official speeches and documents,¹⁵ and an effort was made to project an image of the government as the special friend and protector of the rural classes against the educated classes of the cities who supported the Congress.

At the heart of the anti-Congress policy were efforts to win rural support for the government in order to remove the possibility that either landlords or tenants might find common cause with urban nationalists. Particular attention was given to the restoration of the Indian aristocracies’ fading influence as “nat-

¹⁴ S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858–1905* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 267.

¹⁵ Curzon explained his policy of studied public indifference to the Congress in Curzon to Lord Ampthill, Gov. of Madras, 15 June 1903, MSS. Eur. F. 111/207.

ural leaders" of society.¹⁶ This policy predated the Congress and was based on the notion that "the basis of internal order is . . . to be found in the recognition of a patrician aristocracy of indigenous growth, and trained by past associations to control and lead."¹⁷ As an anti-Congress policy, it was reinstituted by Lord Dufferin, who complained that "at one time it was our policy to cut off the tall poppies."¹⁸ Dufferin intervened on the side of landlords in Bengal, Bihar, and Oudh to modify some of the protection I.C.S. members had written into tenancy bills during the drafting stage.¹⁹ Under Lord Curzon, the pro-aristocracy policy was pursued with determination on the grounds that since the government could offer little "which will fit in with the aspirations of 'young India,' it is most advisable to encourage in every way we can 'older India.'"²⁰ This involved favoring non-Congress landlords in awarding appointments, titles, and honors, granting army commissions in the Imperial Cadet Corps to sons of aristocratic families, insisting that aristocrats develop a high conception of public responsibility and service, and enacting laws to keep landed estates from passing out of the hands of old families. Officials wanted more than that the aristocrats feel well disposed toward the Raj; they also wanted them to enter public life and compete with urban professionals. They encouraged landlords to educate their children so they would be prepared for this competition. And they advised them how to run their organizations.

Government protection and support were extended to small landholders as well as large. The statutory rights of protected tenants²¹ in Bengal, Bihar, and the North-Western Provinces and Oudh were increased in the 1880s. In both Bombay and the Punjab, legislation was passed to prevent the appropriation of

¹⁶ The term "aristocracy" was used loosely in contemporary writings to refer to holders of major titles (rajas, sardars, nawabs, etc.) and major landlords, regardless of whether their position predated the British conquest or had been established through conquest or administrative, military, or religious service. It is used here with similar imprecision.

¹⁷ H.J.S. Cotton, *New India or India in Transition* (London, 1886), p. 122.

¹⁸ Gopal, *British Policy*, p. 190.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-156.

²⁰ Lord George Hamilton, S. of S. for India, to Curzon, 5 Jan. 1900, MSS. Eur. F. 111/159.

²¹ There were two broad categories of agricultural tenants. "Occupancy tenants" were offered protection from unfair ejection and enhancement by tenancy laws; unprotected tenants were given little help by statutes in the nineteenth century.

land by money-lenders and other noncultivating groups. Many officials perceived this strengthening of the interests of landlords and the richer cultivators as a means of retaining the loyalty of rural India and of isolating urban nationalists from a potential source of danger to the British Raj.²²

There were periods between 1885 and 1905 during which British efforts to isolate the educated nationalists seemed to be working. The failure of the Congress to win over many Muslims and large landholders was evident by 1890. Moreover, from roughly 1890 to 1903, the Congress was beset by organizational problems and by some disappointing attendances. Curzon even predicted the collapse of the Congress. Yet each time official optimism rose, new crises developed which indicated that nationalism's appeal might easily spread beyond the university-educated classes.

PORTENTS OF FUTURE TROUBLE

The comforting political placidity of the late nineteenth century was disturbed periodically by religious revival movements, by localized unrest and violence, and by natural catastrophe. None but the crisis of 1897 was major, perhaps, but each was worrisome and potentially dangerous to the Raj.

In the early 1890s, sections of "older India," with support from English-educated nationalists, were aroused against British legislation raising the legal age of marriage to twelve and against British tolerance of cow slaughter. The magnitude of Hindu feeling expressed over the Age of Consent Bill and the cow slaughter issue suggested there existed considerable latent support for anti-British movements outside the English-speaking classes. The refusal of most educated Indians to support the raising of the legal age of marriage indicated that English-educated Indians had realized their Westernized ways had alienated them from their countrymen and that they were now siding with the conservative "masses" against European civilization.²³ The Congress's refusal to permit the Social Reform Conference to use its *pandal* in 1895 was further evidence of a growing Hindu reaction among the nationalists.²⁴

²² For discussion of government land policies, see Chapters Seven and Eight below.

²³ J. D. Rees, *The Real India*, 2nd ed. (London, 1909), p. 255.

²⁴ The Hindu reaction is the subject of Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven.

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In the late 1890s, two major famines, judged by many to be the worst of the century, cast serious doubts on official estimates of increasing prosperity. The inability of poor Indians to survive disease during the famine was evidence of pervasive malnutrition; the death of at least six million Indians stricken with plague between 1896 and 1909 gave further confirmation. Soon after the twin disasters of famine and plague first appeared, a small group of Brahman conspirators, who perceived an erosion of Hinduism, assassinated two British officials responsible for enforcing unpopular plague regulations in Poona in June 1897, foreshadowing the larger terrorist movement which began in 1907.

In the same year as the Poona murders, Muslim tribesmen rose in a bloody rebellion along a lengthy section of the northwest frontier. This trouble on the frontier coincided with a marked increase of Indian Muslim interest in Middle Eastern affairs, stimulated by the Pan-Islamic movement and the 1897 Graeco-Turkish War. The exhortations by the Pan-Islamicists to regard the Sultan of Turkey as the political and spiritual leader of all Muslims made Englishmen apprehensive about future Muslim loyalty to British rule.

The English in India had long been accustomed to local outbreaks of violence and to periods of unrest among isolated sections of the population. What frightened them in 1897 was the convergence of disturbances and the extension of ties between groups which had previously been unconnected. The two Brahmans convicted for the Poona assassinations had had little formal education and yet they seemed to have been influenced by extremists within the Congress, including Tilak. Moreover, Poona politicians used the 1896-1897 famine to seek links with peasant groups. Peasants in neighboring districts followed the lead of educated members of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in a movement to withhold payment of the land revenue demand. The assistant collector of Poona district reported that "not a pie of the revenue instalment" due on 10 December 1896 had been paid to the government.²⁵ In Dharwar district, peasants refused to pay their revenue even in areas where there was no distress.²⁶

²⁵ Memorandum from collector of Poona to asst. collectors in Poona Dist., 28 Dec. 1896. Enclosure to memorandum from the commissioner, Central Div., 30 Dec. 1896. *Famine Prog.* No. 98, *Bombay Rev. Prog.*, *Famine*, Vol. 5, 326.

²⁶ Letter from the commissioner, Southern Div., 26 Jan. 1897. *Famine Prog.* No. 875, *Bombay Rev. Prog.*, *Famine*, Vol. 5, 326.